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AUTHOR Carlisle, Brian A.; Miller, Michael T.
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ABSTRACT

This study examined trends and issues in the involvement of college faculty in institutional governance between 1994 and 1997. The study reviewed 132 issues of "The Chronicle of Higher Education" published during this period to identify any article or news report related to faculty involvement in governance. These topics included faculty support for administrative bodies, faculty strikes, faculty involvement in workload disagreements, planning, and support (or lack thereof) for administrative decision making. This report provides an analysis of 26 articles on a year-by-year basis. Findings indicate that faculty are most often dissatisfied with issues involving the appropriation of power, including perceived undermining of faculty trust or the governance system, efforts to take away faculty rights to participate in decision making, or restructuring plans that appear to give too much power to administrators. Four recommendations are offered: (1) faculty and administrators must clarify areas of separate and shared governance; (2) institutions should work to organize the intent and efforts of faculty governance units; (3) both administrators and faculty governance units must work to improve involvement in decision making; and (4) all parties must work to resolve problems facing higher education. A list of the reviewed articles is attached. (Contains 16 references.) (DB)

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Brian A. Carlisle, M. A.
Research Associate
National Data Base on Faculty Involvement in Governance
Box 870302
Higher Education Administration Program
The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-1168
FAX: (205) 348-2161
e-mail: bcarlisl@gp.as.ua.edu

Michael T. Miller, Ed.D.
Associate Professor and Director
National Data Base on Faculty Involvement in Governance
Box 870302
Higher Education Administration Program
The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-1170
FAX: (205) 348-2161
e-mail: mmiller@bamaed.ua.edu

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Michael T. Miller

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Abstract

Shared authority is often viewed as a privilege or a right, although the discussion has recently evolved into domains of legal precedence and interpretation. The shared or co-governance philosophy has even grown to the creation of workshops and consultants on group decision-making. The study examined trends and issues in the practice of faculty involvement in governance between 1994 and 1997. Findings indicated that faculty tend to be dissatisfied when administrators attempted to make unilateral decisions, thereby blocking faculty input. Also offered were suggestions to both faculty and administrators for improving efficiency and effectiveness of shared decision-making.

"Current Trends and Issues in the Practice of Faculty Involvement in Governance"

College and university leaders have struggled with the concept of effectiveness in relation to the desired outcomes of student learning since the inception of higher education. In pursuit of defining and eventually refining effectiveness, administrators have consistently turned to mechanisms and efforts to implement broad-based, inclusive decision-making. One of the most common tools for creating this inclusive decision-making is a faculty senate or council, a body traditionally comprised of elected or appointed trustees or delegates from faculty ranks to represent faculty concerns to the institution's community (Miller, 1997; Birnbaum, 1991). Depending on their individual constitution and by-laws, faculty senates can exert influence over decisions typically viewed as solely administrative. For example, some faculty senates may propose suggestions on planning and budgeting, curriculum, and promotion and tenure. However, this idea of shared or co-governance has repeatedly sparked heated discussions and debates among faculty and administrators. Each has struggled to identify or clarify the role of faculty in an institution's governance procedures. Although, individual disputes may differ, one question is central to the debate: To what extent should faculty be involved in governance activities?

Although faculty involvement in governance activities have been the subject of repeated research (McCormack, 1995), no definitive resolutions have been reached concerning what role faculty should play in governance. Robert Birnbaum (1988) offered a contextual picture of higher education, where involvement levels and intensity vary based on institutional mission, leadership, faculty expectations, traditions, and the like.

Baliles (1996) argued that the college presidency has been weakened by increased duties and the constant challenge from professors unwilling to compromise with or accept administrative changes. In addition, Benjamin and Carroll (1996) suggested that faculty are incapable of strategic thinking, and they should leave decision-making to those who do. Others maintain that faculty involvement in governance is a "valuable component in decision-making" and is central to creatively developing alternative approaches to solving problems in higher education systems (Miller, McCormack, & Newman, 1995, p. 34). Additionally, shared involvement has the potential to create a more collegial environment based on mutual respect for decision-making content and procedures (Evans, in press). Research has also shown that worker motivation and job performance are directly associated with feelings of belonging and acceptance (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986).

The purpose for conducting the current study was to identify and describe the current state of affairs of faculty involvement in governance. In particular, the study was designed to examine the incidents or trends concerning faculty governance over the past four years. Over 130 issues of The Chronicle of Higher Education were reviewed to identify occurrences of faculty participation in decision-making. In addition, incidents or governance issues involving faculty decision-making units were of interest, as they provide the mechanism through which faculty input is channeled to senior administrators. Also, these incidents are generally representative of the need for better cooperation between faculty and administrators. By examining these trends, a status report on the state of faculty involvement in governance can be developed and utilized as a point for meaningful change or institutional growth in terms of shared authority.

To Involve or Not Involve Faculty

To Involve Faculty

The involvement of faculty in higher education governance tends to be predicated on a fundamental belief that group decision-making has positive residual benefits for the overall organization. For higher education institutions, as complex organizations employing literally thousands of faculty, professional staff, and clerical support personnel, group decision-making can prove both cumbersome and inhibiting. The question to be answered by administrators and faculty alike then, is "why should faculty be involved in governance?"

A humanistic view of worker performance holds that individual performance is enhanced or improved in some dimension when these workers are involved in the decision-making or operation of an organization. In the college or university setting, faculty potentially perform better as teachers, scholars, advisors, service providers and other areas related to their job responsibilities when they have some say or vested interest in the institution's governance structure. Smylie, et al, (1996) reported moderate improvements in teaching performance among school personnel who were involved in governance operations, and Miller, Garavalia, and McCormack (1997) found that community college faculty strongly agree that they are better teachers when they are involved in governance activities.

In addition to instructional performance, institutional operations are potentially enhanced when faculty are involved in institution-wide policy and decision-making. When faculty are allowed to voice their concerns about policies being developed or missions

being articulated, they are more likely to accept joint responsibility in the outcome, which has resultant implications for long term performance (Rosovsky, 1990).

An additional argument for the involvement of faculty in governance has to do with academic freedom and feelings of ownership in performance. Academic freedom, loosely interpreted, maintains that faculty have a vested right in determining matters to be conveyed through teaching or scholarship. This freedom, as the source of much of the instability on college campuses in the 1960's and 1970's, has served as a motivator for faculty to be involved in governance. Kerr (1991), in articulating this motivation, noted that faculty typically fail to utilize the empowerment granted to them as a result of their work to allow for faculty rights in academic matters.

Not Involving Faculty

Rosovsky (1990), the former Dean of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, noted seven laws of university governance, including the precept that not all decisions are made better when more people are involved. This sentiment has been repeatedly noted by administrators and faculty alike (Birnbaum, 1991), despite arguments between faculty and administrators over the boundaries of shared governance. Miller (1996) followed the governance unit in a college of education and observed that generally under 50% of all faculty participated in their open forum. Similarly, attendance was dominated by junior faculty, and senior and mid-career faculty became involved in situational issues of personal importance.

Rosenzweig (1998), the president emeritus of the Association of American Universities, claimed that shared governance often results in divergent thinking and

speaking, segregating campus communities rather than uniting them. Although he conceded that shared governance often slows the decision-making process, he also claimed that this at times is purposive and a positive reason for thoroughly debating and considering issues of institutional importance.

There are multiple lists of difficulties in involving faculty in governance, including: slowed decision-making, dominance of special interest groups, personal and professional concerns and interests overriding institutional well-being, apathy, mistrust, inadequate use of communication channels to make rational decisions, an unwillingness to make difficult decisions and reductions, and an inability to differentiate between important institutional concerns and trivial matters of no consequence (Gilmour, 1991; Miller, in press).

Research Procedures

Data for the study were collected by reviewing the past four years of The Chronicle of Higher Education, beginning with August 10, 1994 and ending November 21, 1997. Each issue was studied to identify any article or news event description related to faculty involvement in governance. Broadly, these topics included faculty support for administrative bodies, faculty strikes, faculty involvement in workload disagreements, planning, and support, or lack thereof, for administrative decision-making. A total of 26 articles from 132 issues of The Chronicle were identified for use in data analysis (Table 1).

The Chronicle of Higher Education was selected due to its mission of reporting all information or news related to higher education. The newspaper-style publication typically includes news sections on technology, students, athletics, research, finance, international, and faculty.

After the identification of the articles, each was read to identify a particular topic or theme. These themes were then placed in a chronological timeline, and studied to identify possible trends or themes regarding the current practice of faculty in higher education governance. The process was validated by submitting the identified themes and copies of all of the articles to the Board of Directors of the National Data Base on Faculty Involvement in Governance. These seven experts on the involvement of faculty in governance rendered suggestions and recommendations on how to classify particular news items and stories, as well as the identification of thematic clusters.

Findings

1994

Faculty strikes or walk-outs were frequent occurrences in 1994. Although the American Association of Unionized Professors (AAUP) claimed that faculty strikes are rare, at least four such incidents transpired in 1994. In August 1994, the demoralized faculty at the University of New Hampshire threatened to strike because of low faculty pay. The following month, the faculty overwhelmingly voted 226 to 58 to strike. Around the same time, faculty members at Wayne State University and Oakland University held strikes or walk-outs over salary and benefits issues. Although the faculty at the University of New Hampshire accepted a two-year contract, ultimately avoiding a devastating strike, the faculty at Wayne State University continued their campaign for two days. In October, the faculty at the C. W. Post campus of Long Island University voted to strike, complaining of heavy course-loads. After three days, the faculty decided to return to their classrooms without reaching an agreement or acquiring a new contract.

Another frequently occurring and pressing issue during the year was faculty perceptions of overbearing administrators. In late September, the faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder, argued that the board of trustees violated a fundamental standard of faculty governance. The board disregarded the suggestions of faculty members, the department chair, and the president by promoting a non-endorsed or supported faculty member, infuriating all involved. In particular, the faculty collectively asserted that this act was a clear violation of their academic freedom.

In November, the faculty at the York College of the City University of New York voted 94 to 25 no confidence in their president. The vote came shortly after it was announced that CUNY auditors were investigating the president's inappropriate use of a discretionary fund. Although the president believed that faculty members were too hasty in passing judgment, faculty union members encouraged the university to take quick action and replace the president. In December, faculty members at Rutgers University argued that the administration was too "heavy handed." They believed that speaking out against administrators resulted in office reassignments, with the goal of isolating "trouble makers."

In the summer of the year, faculty members at Bennington College argued that the administration's restructuring plan destroyed faculty structures of governance. The new restructuring plan called for the dismissal of twenty-six faculty members.

1995

In January 1995, a federal review panel, the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations, encouraged Congress to rewrite the definition of managerial employees. The commission argued that the new definition should allow faculty members

a greater role in decision-making without the fear of being "stripped" of their collective bargaining rights.

The common theme in 1995 was the distrust of overpowering administrators. In January, faculty members at Clemson University complained that the new restructuring plan gave more power to administrators over decisions regarding tenure and money appropriation. Leaders of the faculty senate claimed that the new plan removed faculty members from the decision-making process. In March, faculty members at James Madison University voted no confidence in their president by a vote of 305 to 197. They alleged that the new restructuring plan cut faculty members from governance procedures and afforded too much power to administrators. A few months later, an organized faculty group called the Faculty for Responsible Change sued the university for attempting to remove faculty from decision-making. In September, 110 professors at Rutgers University expressed "deep discontent" in their president. They argued that the president rarely consulted with faculty members on academic matters. In December, 65 professors at Florida A&M University filed grievances against the university alleging a violation of their union contract. Faculty members claimed that their workload was not similar to those of professors in other state university system institutions.

1996

In 1996, faculty members again felt as if they were being shut out of the decision-making process by dominating administrators. In February, faculty members at the University of California argued that the regents of the university were preventing them from making key decisions regarding bans on racial preferences. Four months later, the AAUP condemned the regents of the University of California for acting alone. The AAUP

argued that by acting alone, the regents violated the basic principle of shared governance. In April, the Academic Senate at Wayne State University voted no confidence in the new policies created by its president by a vote of 38 to 11. After speaking to various department heads, the president agreed to make minor changes to the new policies. However, his decision not to change some of the new policies angered faculty members who protested that the new policies were a violation of their academic freedom. In the same month, faculty members at Francis Marion University voted no confidence in their president. They claimed that he made decisions regarding curriculum and tenure without seeking advice from the faculty senate or faculty members in general. In May, the faculty at Goddard College voted no confidence in their president by a vote of 42 to 1. Faculty members argued that the president "undermined its tradition of shared governance" by making unilateral decisions regarding curriculum and faculty hiring. In July, members of the faculty union at the University of the District of Columbia sued the university for barring union officers from serving in the university senate. Union members alleged that their constitutional rights to freedom of association had been violated. In September, angered faculty members at the University of Minnesota protested new policy proposals. They claimed that the new policies would eliminate tenure and give too much power to administrators. In December, faculty members at the University of Notre Dame voted "strong disapproval" of the president's involvement in a faculty hiring decision by a vote of 29 to 5 with 3 abstentions. Although the faculty and the department chair of the theology department gave negative recommendations regarding a candidate for professorship, the president offered the candidate the position. Faculty members said that

the president's decision was a "violation of the basic trust that ought to exist between a faculty and administration."

1997

Again, the most pressing issue in 1997 was administrators with too much power and influence. In May, the board of trustees at Francis Marion University dismantled the faculty senate after the senate failed to implement a plan devised by the board. Faculty members argued that the action of the trustees destroyed all structures of governance, and many believed that the board's decision was in reaction to the faculty's vote of no confidence in the previous year. In June, faculty members at Santa Rosa Junior College voted no confidence in their president. Faculty members were furious when they discovered that the president ordered searches of faculty offices, personnel files, and computers. They argued that the president violated their trust and constitutional right to privacy. In October, faculty members at the University of Michigan at Dearborn objected to a new policy on promotion and tenure. They claimed that the new policy gave too much power to administrators and allowed some faculty members to receive tenure although other faculty members had recommended otherwise. In November, faculty members at Wayne State University argued that the administration attempted to take away their right to privacy when the president issued his new policy on the use of university computer systems. In his policy, the president indicated that the university had the authority to monitor e-mail and internet access, and he mandated that university computers were to be strictly used for university related business. Faculty members claimed that the president was taking a "tyrannical approach" to governance.

Discussion

The involvement of faculty in higher education governance activities assumes a position of shared authority acceptance in the institution. This shared authority includes responsibility for making decisions in a timely fashion as well as the accountability of living with these decisions. Unfortunately, disagreements over role responsibilities often lead to increased animosity between those making the decisions. While faculty and administrators alike struggle to define their position in this shared or co-governance system, the institutional decision-making process often suffers. Apathy, mistrust, the dominance of special interest groups, and an unwillingness to accept change are just a few of the many contributions to slowed decision-making. As previously noted, involvement in shared governance activities has the potential to enhance long term job performance, foster feelings of ownership, and encourage joint responsibility of outcome. The central question to the debate then remains: To what extent should faculty be involved in governance activities?

Findings of the research indicate that faculty are most often dissatisfied with issues involving the appropriation of power. Between 1994 and 1997, eight cases of faculty votes of no confidence were observed, and of these eight, seven were in direct response to administrative policies or procedures that were viewed as attempts to undermine the trust of the faculty or the governance system of the individual institution. In addition, two faculty unions filed class action law suits against their respective institutions during these years. Each case involved the continued efforts of administrators to take away faculty rights to participate in decision-making. Restructuring plans that afforded too much

power to administrators also produced heated debates among faculty and administrators during this time.

These trends, and the academic research which enhances the understanding of what is happening on college campuses leads to a serious dialogue about how shared governance should be framed. Although each institution must find its own sense of shared governance "fit," several recommendations concerning effectiveness in decision-making can be drawn from this research.

1. There must be a clarification of who is responsible for what, and to what extent the system of checks and balances can be debated. In a sense, what are faculty governance units good at, and what are they trying to fulfill? The extension of this relates to how governance units can check administrative powers without the extremes of striking or non-confidence votes. Operationally, this means that faculty and administrators must rationally and systematically agree upon how they will work together and what areas they will mutually respect as issues of shared governance.

2. The disjointed nature of faculty governance units may be an indication that institutions must work harder to organize the intent and efforts of faculty. This organization may include greater union participation, or more broadly, may relate to the general structure and efficiency of governance units. Central to this organization is the need to respond to better representation, and the avenues utilized to involve different types of faculty (minority, junior ranking, emeritus, etc.) from various disciplines in decision-making.

3. Administrators must take the lead in encouraging faculty participation in governance activities, and governance units must similarly work to gain greater

(quantitative and qualitative) involvement in decision-making. Faculty must ultimately live with the level of their own involvement, but they will only respond to honest and meaningful efforts to involve faculty early in the decision-making process. While faculty can and should be encouraged from among their own ranks, only a demonstration of trust and commitment to communication will prove to be effective in enhancing participative management.

4. There must be a genuine effort by all parties to find meaningful resolution to problems facing higher education. Higher education in general continues to be only marginally responsive to the general public's demands for accountability. As this critical mass of the general public continues to question the operation and intent of higher education, administrators and faculty must work more closely to answer their criticisms.

Shared authority in higher education, as alluded to the current events identified, has become and is increasingly political in nature. This politicization has benefits in faculty serving as a watch-dog to administrative behaviors, but has serious shortcomings in regard to efficiency and effectiveness. Faculty and administrators alike must work more systematically in resolving conflicts and in collaborating to make decisions which positively impact the campus, disciplines, and the philosophy of higher learning. Only through strong shared authority and a rational plan for equality in representation can institutions adequately serve the public and their various constituents with the integrity of which they have drawn their historical tradition.

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Table 1
Articles Reviewed to Identify Trends

Title	Date	Iss (Vol)
Effective August 30, the University...	08/10/94	49 (XL)
Professors at U. of New Hampshire Vote to Strike Over Pay	09/14/94	3 (XLI)
Col. Regents Reject Promotion of Erotic-Literature Scholar	09/28/94	5 (XLI)
Some professors at the C.W. Post campus...	10/26/94	9 (XLI)
Faculty-union leaders at the University...	11/09/94	11 (XLI)
The bad relationship between the president...	11/30/94	14 (XLI)
A Personnel Matter at Rutgers Flares Into a Conflagration Over Governance	12/14/94	16 (XLI)
Clemson University has proposed a major...	01/13/95	18 (XLI)
What are the odds on the Republican-controlled...	01/20/95	19 (XLI)
The tense relationship between the faculty...	02/03/95	2 (XLI)
'Restructuring' Stirs Outcry at James Madison	03/03/95	25 (XLI)
Members of the Modern Language Association...	05/05/95	34 (XLI)
A group of professors has sued James Madison...	05/26/95	37 (XLI)
More than 100 senior professors at Rutgers University...	09/15/95	3 (XLII)
Faculty members at Florida A&M University...	12/08/95	15 (XLII)
U. of Cal. Chief Won't Delay Ban on Race Preferences	02/09/96	22 (XLII)
To David Adamany, president of Wayne State University...	04/12/96	31 (XLII)
Goddard College calls itself a place of "progressive...	05/03/96	34 (XLII)
Professors' Group Condemns U. of California Ban on Affirmative Action	06/07/96	39 (XLII)
Faculty Union Files Suit Against U. of D.C.	07/05/96	43 (XLII)
Minnesota Regents' Proposal Would Effectively Abolish Tenure, Faculty Leaders Say	09/20/96	4 (XLIII)
Notre Dame Senate Voices 'Disapproval' of President	12/13/96	16 (XLIII)
Trustees of Francis Marion U. Dissolve the Faculty Senate	05/02/97	34 (XLIII)
A College Is Riled After Administrators Search Faculty Offices and Computer Files	06/06/97	39 (XLIII)
Mich. Campus Revises Its New Tenure Policy	10/31/97	10 (XLIV)
Wayne State U. Bans Internet Use That Is Not Related to University Purposes	11/21/97	13 (XLIV)